Google AI Studio — Deletion & Data Retention Evidence Report

Public-source investigation • Research cut-off: 14 August 2026

Purpose: A neutral evidence record covering the public claims about AI Studio prompt deletion, Google Drive trash/recovery behavior, possible backend retention, and privacy/legal context. The report separates official statements from user-generated claims.

Executive finding

There is a genuine technical/privacy question worth investigating. A Google AI Developers Forum user, Bitu79, reports that an AI Studio prompt can allegedly be recovered after deletion and emptying Google Drive Trash, with the previous AI session continuing. Multiple forum posts document the claim and claimed video/screenshots.

The public material reviewed here does not independently establish Google's backend architecture, intentional misconduct, or a GDPR violation. At least one forum participant reported being unable to reproduce the result.

Google's own policy is important context: Google says deletion can involve delays, complete deletion generally takes around two months, and encrypted backups may retain data for up to six months. Therefore, surviving data is not automatically proof of wrongdoing. The sharper question is whether the specific AI Studio behavior matches what users are told and what the product promises.

Evidence classification

Question	Status	Assessment
Recovery after AI Studio deletion	Public claim	Specific and testable; independently unverified here
Drive Trash lifecycle	Official	Google says 30 days; emptying Trash is described as permanent deletion
General Google deletion process	Official	Delays and backup retention are expressly disclosed
AI Studio live backend survives permanent deletion	Unproven	Requires independent reproduction and technical verification
Intentional deception/scam	Unproven	No reviewed source establishes intent
GDPR violation	Unproven legal conclusion	Requires full facts, legal basis, exceptions, jurisdiction and regulatory assessment

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1. Central technical allegation

The core allegation is more specific than “Google keeps backups.” The forum user says that after an AI Studio prompt is deleted and the associated Drive item is permanently removed, a recovery process can allegedly restore the JSON/project reference and make the original AI Studio session usable again with its previous context.

• June 10, 2026: Bitu79 publishes “Proven data retention after deletion in Google AI Studio – developers are required to reply.”

• The described sequence is: create prompt → delete in AI Studio → empty Google Drive Trash → wait → use Google's recovery tooling.

• The user says the restored item caused the prior AI session to continue.

• Another participant reported that they could not reproduce the behavior on their accounts.

• Later July posts repeat and expand the same technical interpretation.

Important: Even if the recovery result is genuine, it does not by itself reveal whether the surviving state is an active production record, backup, cache, index, soft-deleted object, or another mechanism.

2. Primary forum evidence

Google AI Developers Forum — Proven data retention after deletion
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/proven-data-retention-after-deletion-in-google-ai-studio-developers-are-required-to-reply/170541
Original June 10, 2026 thread.

Forum #10 — claimed step-by-step test
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/proven-data-retention-after-deletion-in-google-ai-studio-developers-are-required-to-reply/170541/10
Describes deletion, emptying Trash, waiting, and recovery.

Forum #12 — contrary reproduction report
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/proven-data-retention-after-deletion-in-google-ai-studio-developers-are-required-to-reply/170541/12
A participant says they could not reproduce the result.

Forum #15 — user's reproducibility argument
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/proven-data-retention-after-deletion-in-google-ai-studio-developers-are-required-to-reply/170541/15
User argues the video demonstrates continued context.

Technical Evidence post
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/technical-evidence-demonstrating-that-google-ai-studio-s-delete-function-does-not-delete-backend-data/173589
July 2026 technical interpretation.

3. UI wording and “Delete” vs “Move to Trash”

JSON vs. PROMPT distinction
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/json-vs-prompt-distinction-google-s-misleading-claim/170679
User quotes the AI Studio dialog as “Move prompt to trash” and “permanently deleted after 30 days.”

Google AI Studio’s “Delete” button is misleading
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/google-ai-studio-s-delete-button-is-misleading/170101
Contains the user's description of the deletion/recovery test.

The exact UI wording matters. The investigation should preserve dated screenshots of the exact dialog, help text, and product behavior.

4. Google's official deletion and retention statements

Google Privacy Policy — effective 26 May 2026
https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-IN
Official Google privacy policy.

Google — How Google retains data we collect
https://policies.google.com/technologies/retention?hl=en-US
Official retention policy.

- Google says deletion starts a process to remove data from the product and systems.
- Google says complete deletion generally takes around two months.
- Google says this can include up to a month-long recovery period for accidental deletion.
- Google says encrypted backup storage may retain data for up to six months.
- Google says some information may be retained longer for legitimate business or legal purposes.

This official policy means retention during a deletion process can be expected. The investigative issue is whether AI Studio's specific behavior is within that disclosed process and whether content remains actively retrievable or processable beyond what users are told.

5. Google Drive's official behavior

Google Drive Help — What happens when you delete a file
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/14933051?hl=en
Official help.

Google Drive Help — Delete files
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2375102?hl=en
Official instructions.

Google Drive Help — Recover a deleted file
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/1716222
Official recovery documentation.

Google says Drive Trash items remain for 30 days; after that they are deleted forever, and manually emptying Trash deletes the files forever. Some deleted files may sometimes be recoverable under certain conditions. The AI Studio session lifecycle must therefore be tested separately from the Drive file lifecycle.

6. GDPR / privacy-law context

EUR-Lex — GDPR Regulation (EU) 2016/679
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.119.01.0001.01.ENG
Primary EU legal text.

EDPB — 2026 coordinated action on right to erasure
https://www.edpb.europa.eu/news/edpb-identifies-challenges-hindering-full-implementation-right-erasure_en
Published 18 February 2026.

GDPR Article 17 establishes a right to erasure in defined circumstances, but the right is not absolute and contains exceptions. A recovery demonstration can be relevant evidence, but it does not itself prove unlawful processing.

The EDPB's 2026 enforcement work identifies difficulties around retention periods and deletion of personal data in backups. That supports careful investigation rather than assuming every surviving backup is automatically unlawful.

7. Competing technical explanations

Hypothesis	Meaning	What would test it
Soft-delete	Visible item is removed while session remains recoverable for a disclosed period.	Documentation + behavior + retention window
Backup retention	Data survives only in backup systems, not normal live service.	Show backup-only state and inability to use session
Active backend retention	Live service still serves/processes session after expected deletion.	Independent post-deletion access/continuation
Recovery-layer behavior	Recovery restores metadata/project state and reconnects content elsewhere.	Controlled experiment + technical traces
Bug/regression	Deletion is intended to work but implementation leaves recoverable state.	Multiple accounts + versions + Google response

8. Independent reproducibility protocol

Use only harmless test data and preserve an auditable record.

1. Record account type, AI Studio date/version, browser and timezone.
2. Create a unique harmless test prompt containing a random identifier.
3. Record the AI Studio session URL and capture the pre-deletion state.
4. Delete the prompt using the exact UI; capture the deletion dialog.
5. Record the corresponding Google Drive item/project state.
6. Empty Drive Trash only if testing that exact claim.
7. Record timestamps and the wait interval.
8. Use only Google's documented recovery mechanism.
9. Attempt recovery and record whether the original session becomes usable.
10. Check whether the unique identifier and previous context are genuinely present.
11. Repeat with fresh prompts and, ideally, independent accounts.
12. Preserve unedited recordings, screenshots, timestamps and exact steps.

9. Evidence that would materially strengthen the case

• Independent full-screen reproduction of the same result.

• Replication across unrelated accounts.

• Recovery still works after the normal documented deletion window.

• Proof that the recovered content is the original server-side conversation rather than metadata or a backup artifact.

• Proof that the session can still be actively processed or continued after the point at which the product represents it as permanently deleted.

• Dated copies of the exact deletion dialog and associated documentation.

• A written technical response from Google explaining the lifecycle of prompt/session data.

• Independent security/privacy researcher or regulator confirmation.

Evidence that would weaken the allegation: clean independent reproduction failures, evidence that the behavior is an explicitly documented recovery/backup mechanism, or evidence that the recovered object is not the deleted AI Studio conversation itself.

10. Public-record timeline

Date	Public event
11 May 2026	Bitu79 publishes a broader evidence post alleging AI Studio deletion inconsistencies and other data-handling issues.
8 Jun 2026	Post titled “Google AI Studio’s ‘Delete’ button is misleading” appears.
10 Jun 2026	Detailed deletion/recovery allegation and test sequence are posted.
11 Jun 2026	Further posts discuss JSON vs. prompt/session data and claimed restoration.
12 Jun 2026	Separate post alleges intentional retention and mentions a GDPR complaint.
5 Jul 2026	More detailed technical-evidence post expands the backend-retention interpretation.
18 Jul 2026	Archived references related to the claimed complaint/evidence appear in the thread.
14 Aug 2026	This report classifies public evidence as official, claimed, unresolved, or unproven.

11. Conclusions

1 — Worth investigating: The public record contains a specific, technically testable allegation supported by multiple posts and claimed evidence.

2 — Not independently proven: The claim that AI Studio's live backend session definitely remains intact after permanent deletion is primarily supported by the reporting user's own tests; at least one forum participant reported failure to reproduce it.

3 — Google's policy matters: Google expressly discloses delayed deletion, active/backup copies, approximately two months for complete deletion in general, and backup retention up to six months.

4 — Transparency is the strongest user-facing issue: If actual AI Studio behavior materially differs from what a reasonable user would understand from the deletion dialog and documentation, that is a more defensible criticism than an unsupported accusation of fraud.

5 — GDPR is a legal question: The right to erasure has conditions and exceptions. A regulator or court would need the full technical and contractual facts.

12. Recommended evidence package

• Original unedited screen recordings and hashes/timestamps.

• Exact AI Studio session URL and harmless test identifier.

• Exact deletion UI wording.

• Drive state before and after emptying Trash.

• Exact deletion-to-recovery interval.

• Recovery-tool screenshots/video.

• Post-recovery session behavior.

• Independent replication attempts, including failures.

• Archived Google policy versions.

• Any written response from Google/DPO/support.

• Chronology with timestamps.

• Separate legal review by a qualified privacy professional if formal action is contemplated.

13. Source register

Google Privacy Policy
https://policies.google.com/privacy?hl=en-IN

Google retention policy
https://policies.google.com/technologies/retention?hl=en-US

Google Drive deletion help
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/14933051?hl=en

Google Drive delete files
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2375102?hl=en

Google Drive recovery help
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/1716222

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AI Developers Forum — JSON vs prompt
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/json-vs-prompt-distinction-google-s-misleading-claim/170679

AI Developers Forum — delete button
https://discuss.ai.google.dev/t/google-ai-studio-s-delete-button-is-misleading/170101

EUR-Lex GDPR
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.119.01.0001.01.ENG

EDPB 2026 right-to-erasure action
https://www.edpb.europa.eu/news/edpb-identifies-challenges-hindering-full-implementation-right-erasure_en

Methodology & limitations

Public-source review conducted 14 August 2026. This report does not have access to Google's internal systems, server logs, source code, account audit records, or private evidence unless publicly accessible. Forum statements are attributed to their authors and are not treated as independent proof. Legal discussion is informational, not legal advice.